

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

The workshop on Catholic Social Teaching, in line with the convention's emphasis on cultural diversity, focused on the role of ethnic minorities. The presenters were Allen Figueroa Deck (Loyola Marymount University) and Roberto S. Goizueta (Loyola University, Chicago).

Deck, in a paper titled "I Was a Stranger and You Welcomed Me: New Directions in the Catholic Understanding of Immigration Rights," presented a careful analysis of the rights of migrants in social teaching, showing how the rights to emigrate and immigrate have a longstanding presence in Catholic doctrine. Such teaching undercuts the status quo emphasis on national sovereignty in international affairs. He then contrasted Catholic teaching with the practice of the United States, where rights are limited to those of a political nature, thus limiting grounds for immigration to political asylum. Given this gap between Catholic teaching and the practice of the United States, Deck raised the question of why Catholic ethicists have not taken up the issue of migration, citing the one exception of an article by Drew Christiansen. Deck concluded by suggesting that the work of Goizueta may be helpful in interpreting the right of migration in terms of the option for the poor.

Goizueta's paper in fact set out the development of the concept of the option for the poor. He examined three documents from the Latin American Bishops (CELAM) and one from the bishops of the United States. The main point of his argument is that there has been a general shift from understanding the poor as the beneficiaries of God's activity to their being the locus of that activity. In this shift, there has also been an overcoming of the overdrawn distinctions between spiritual and temporal, clergy and laity, and supernatural and natural.

The documents of the Latin American bishops from the Medellín (1968) and Puebla (1979) conferences introduced and developed a concept of the option for the poor that broke from earlier models of addressing poverty. The earlier models emphasized ethical injunctions to help the poor, while these later documents stressed the poor themselves as constituting a privileged locus of the work of the Spirit. In the most recent document from the Latin American Bishops issued from Santo Domingo (1992), there is a return to ethical injunction. The American Catholic Bishops' 1983 pastoral letter, "The Hispanic Presence: Challenge and Commitment," reflects both of the CELAM meanings of the option for the poor. This leads to the separation of the problems of cultural oppression, which is a direct attack on the expression of the faith, and socioeconomic poverty, consid-

ered to be the result of violations of ethical injunctions on the part of the economically well off.

After the presentations, Deck and Goizueta entered into direct dialogue with each other on the problem of relating the issues of cultural oppression and socioeconomic poverty. Both agreed that there is a relationship between the separation of the issues and the competing understandings of the option for the poor. There was also considerable discussion of the limits of migration rights. William George raised the question of whether the claim to migration rights utterly cancels the rights of nations. If not, then how does one adjudicate between the two. Deck responded that the rights of migrants ought to have priority. Given how little priority is given to such rights in the United States, the practical problem of giving too much weight to migrant claims is not one likely to arise in the near future.

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